

THE MAIDAN

I often hear the phrase: "The Maidan¹ changed my life," "On the Maidan, I realized everything," etc. As a rule, people who considered us to be fascists before the Maidan, during it — provocateurs, and after — the Kremlin agents — used to say these phrases. Now there are many people who are seeking for the punishment for those who had shot the Heavenly Hundred Heroes² and many of those who care about murdered Berkuts and VV³, there are many people who talk about a fight against corruption, but cursing Sashko Bily⁴, those who are praising ATO⁵ soldiers but travel to Crimea and vote for a new Party of Regions⁶, there are many people who hope in the European Union, but hate changes in the country. Everywhere you can hear "Glory to Ukraine," but no one thinks about what it means. Every other man is now a "patriot"... This story began much earlier, at a time when for the slogan "Glory to Ukraine" people were taken to the police department or to start a street fight with so-called "grandeeswhofought"⁷ right in the center of the city.

¹ "The Maidan" — a square (Eng.) Here the Maidan is a name for the events occurred during winter 2013/14 in Kyiv on Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Ukrainian))

² Order of the Heavenly Hundred Heroes — protesters killed during the Maidan received this name for their civil courage, patriotism and the defense of the constitutional principles of democracy, human rights, and freedom

³ Berkut and VV — were special units of government law enforcement who participated in clashes at winter 2013/14

⁴ Sashko Bily — controversial nationalist was famous for his participation in Russian-Chechen war on the Caucasus in 90's on the side of Chechens. He gained popularity of uncompromising actions against corrupted government and local authorities. Murdered on March 25th, 2014 by the special police unit when already new Ukrainian government was in charge.

⁵ ATO — Anti Terrorist Operation how Ukrainian president P. Poroshenko decided to name Russian-Ukrainian war.

⁶ Party of Regions — was ex-president Yanukovich puppet party. Currently prohibited in Ukraine.

⁷ Grandeeswhofought — intentionally merged words of a mem as a result of Russian propaganda overkilled theme of WW2 veterans in an attempt to raise Russian unity.

UKRAINIAN ALTERNATIVE

*Children are always vexed
By their age and their everyday
And we fought to scratches,
To mortal resentments.
But our mothers
Patched our clothes in time
Whereas we swallowed books,
Getting drunk from the words.*

**Ballad of Strife
Vladimir Vysotsky**

I do not know how it happened to me. I was not bad at school. I even was awarded a medal for an excellent study. Then I was accepted to a good university. Oh, yes, and my family was normal, no one beat me and did not infringe me, and everything was fine. Maybe not perfect, with the nuances, but it's like everywhere else so that there are no silly references to childhood. I had dreams about family, work, a car... I imagined myself to be an engineer, to work hard for the people good, to get a decent salary bring it home, and it is enough to provide for a family, and everything would be wonderful everywhere, nice people around, justice and living in great comfort, but... But in fact, life is a little different. At the university, I immediately faced with corruption, although at that time I did not recognize it. Not local? Do you want to live on a college campus? It is possible, but you need to give some money to the campus commandant. Otherwise, there will be no rooms for you. So I started to rent an apartment, there was nothing wrong with that, but it cost money, and some of the apartments were far from the place of my study. It wasn't a problem. The study itself was fun, until the end of the term when some professors told us that the syllabus isn't a green color but a color of a US dollar and it had to be taken into account. And we took it into account up to the possible level. Several terms passed like this, some with difficulties some normally. For me, then, however, it was a mystery why some

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of my classmates used to appear only for the examination period driving expensive cars and still receive the excellent grades.

After a while, my time came to settle in a campus building. A wonderful inexpensive place was situated near the university buildings. All my friends were living nearby, not very chic, but for life, it was good enough. Although I did not understand why it took me almost a year to wait, because there were free rooms, and in some rooms, there were people who did not have anything to do with the university. There was another campus building next to us, more attractive. However, it was not for ordinary people, but for foreign students, more about it further.

Thus, time went by studying, working out, doing gigs and sports, and street fights as well. It continued up to the third year. Then we started to study the course of Cultural Studies. It seemed to be a great subject, but it wasn't. The professor was a Russian woman, and in the course of every lecture, she tried to convince us that the "Khokhly"⁸ as she called us, had responsibility for all the troubles of the Russian people. Everyone kept silent. I tried to object and ask why such an ardent patriot of another country taught in the Ukrainian higher educational institution. The deputy dean called me, and both of them with my professor tried to explain to me that such guys as I caused two nations – Russian and Jewish not live peacefully. I was puzzled by such a statement, and I did not know what to do with it. In their tirade, they have mentioned Hitler and his book "Mein Kampf" a couple of times. I knew from school who was Hitler, but I was not familiar with his writings. Well, "Petrivka"⁹ helped me, to get that book. The book did go well on the first read – there were a lot of strange words and all the talks about subjects I was not competent in, however, the sections on politics and propaganda were pretty good. Yeah, that wasn't the first book I had read in my life. I loved reading, and I had a lot of books. That was the first book of this kind of where my life will lead me further. Ironically my "favorite" professors lead me to this book. I read it and forgot it... for a while.

⁸ Khokhly – the name Russians gave to Ukrainians to offend them. That points to a specific haircut Ukrainian Cossacks had when long tail of hair only left on the head.

⁹ Petrivka – the popular market in Kyiv to buy books

Then there was an incident that confused me. I already said that our campus building was next to another one the same building, but for foreigners, where largely the Turks lived. They had a strange lifestyle – they did not attend the lectures, they used to spend their time in the cafes, and they spent their money which they had a lot. Some even started their own business on campus territory hookah cafe, etc. They all got excellent grades, but when I talked to one of those “A” grade students, so he after four years of studying on technical university did not know what a discriminant was and how to calculate it. It seemed to be strange. Generally, why was it necessary to provide the foreigners with housing if they had enough money to buy an apartment, while your countrymen rent an apartment spending took last of his or her money on the outskirts of the city? Anyways. Once at evening a girl who lived a few floors above, came to us all beaten and crying. She said that those Turks, from another building, raped her. Well, the thing was – our beautiful ladies had a habit of being close to those “people.” I did not know their motivation – most likely money. But this was a completely different story, that girl was not seen there to have such contacts. She studied and lived on campus and simply got dragged into the car when she walked to the campus after classes. What happened next, no need to tell. So what we were supposed to do? At that time, there were no preconditions for racial issues; just some people did a very bad thing with a person we knew, no one considered nationality of the offenders if they were Ukrainians, our reaction would be the same. We gathered a lot of men, almost all the guys from our campus building, and went to our ‘overseas friends’. Those, to put it mildly, did not expect such a turn – apparently, this is not the first time they have done such a thing and got away with it. Not at this time. There was a big fight, with use of knives, bottles and armature wires. All this was stopped only by the police. Many of the Turks went to the hospital and then home to Turkey.

It seems that everything was fair, and I think even too easy because the bruises and their bones will heal, however, a question if the girl will recover and live with this. But justice in our country meant something else. The criminal cases were opened on many Ukrainian guys involved in that conflict, and many were expelled from the university instantly, the rest expelled later, even under

different pretexts. This girl was also kicked out from the university, and her case disappeared from the police. What happened to the Turks? Nothing at all! Those who were hurt a lot left home to Turkey, and the rest moved to another campus building further from us. The university apologized to them for such behavior of Ukrainian students, and the police threatened to punish all Ukrainians. And how is this called? In your house came an alien, dishonored your relatives, you answered adequately, and you get punished? Imagine if this situation occurred in Turkey. Would many Ukrainians have escaped to home? Would someone apologize for them? That time the thoughts began to creep in that something is not right, not everything is as beautiful as the TV says, and good does not always win, as taught in childhood.

I got expelled from University at the next term. There was not everything clear about it. Even I passed all the exams, but the results weren't filled into to the exam list. Only the deputy dean was smiling when he met me. So, at the end of my studies, I switched to the distance study. I had to find a job. There were still some illusions that if you worked well, everything in your life would be fine. Intelligent people are always valued, and I was not a fool. It was a rather boring period, the jobs changed one after another: from a shop assistant to the sales manager, from the merchant to the supervisor. That time made clear if work honestly, you cannot earn money in this country. If you want to be richer than others, you have to deceive others and play a double game. Not those who work more and better make more money, but the one who has connections, who has wealthy relatives, the one who gets into bed with someone influent stole, killed or deceived earned much more. Such a flight of human vices on the way to their happiness.

I finished my studies, although I did not care about it during the last term. There were questions, and to find the answer to them was difficult. Like many young people, I got carried away with the right ideology. Although at that time I had a blurry understanding of what it was. I had the questions and was looking for the answers. I received the proper literature, and I found forums of all sorts of organizations on the Internet. But, like all people, I wanted to find the answer to a difficult question quickly, and I preferred the simplest one. That time the answer was illegal immigration.